



MEDIA RELEASE

Taxi Tips

SANTA BARBARA, CA – July 26, 2012

During special events like Fiesta, many residents rely on taxicabs for transportation to and from event venues throughout the City. Here are some tips about the taxicab program in the City of Santa Barbara that may help keep you safe and prevent you from paying more than you have to when hiring a taxicab.

BEFORE GETTING INTO A CAB:

- The City of Santa Barbara does not regulate taxicab rates, so the rates from one company to another will vary widely (see the sample range chart below). The maximum rates a taxicab can charge must be listed on the taxi's door and posted within the taxi. It pays to be aware of the posted rates before getting in a taxi.
- Taxis aren't allowed to stop in the middle of the street or at red curbs to pick up passengers. The easiest way to get a taxi downtown is to proceed to the nearest taxi stand where you'll find a line of taxicabs awaiting fares.
- Although it's customary to take the first taxicab in line at a taxi stand, customers are not required to do so. This allows customers to have control over which rate they will pay for their ride. If you choose not to take the first taxicab in a line, as a courtesy you should let the people in line behind you go ahead of you until the taxi you want to hire has progressed to the first position in line. If there are no other people waiting in line for a taxi, you may hire any taxi from the line.
- Many taxi companies offer a discounted rate to passengers who reserve a taxicab in advance. You should always ask when pre-arranging a ride.
- Taxi drivers cannot refuse a fare based on the distance of the requested trip (too short), nor can they charge a "minimum fee" that exceeds the meter rate. Report any drivers who do either.
- Many companies have higher fares for the vans, SUVs, and limo-style taxicabs in their fleets. If you call in advance for a taxicab and have a small group or are traveling alone, be sure to ask the dispatcher to send a car instead of a larger vehicle so that you don't unintentionally pay a higher rate than necessary.
- Avoid "rogue" taxis. Legitimate taxicabs will have their rates posted on both sides of the exterior along with the company name, a phone number, and a cab ID. Taxis authorized by the City will also have round decals on the rear of the taxicab indicating that they have been authorized by the City to operate through the month listed on the decal. (Note: some legitimate taxis may have the previous month's sticker on the decal, but the driver will be able to produce a letter issued by the Police Department indicating the date through which they may continue operating.) If a taxicab does not have a current sticker on the back and the driver cannot

produce paperwork to prove that it is authorized, it is recommended that you take a different taxi.

IN THE CAB:

- Always ask the driver for a business card, and make sure to note the driver's name and cab number if they aren't already on the card. If you accidentally leave something in the cab, or if you later have a complaint about the cab or driver, that information will be important.
- A taxi driver can never charge more than the meter rate for the fare, regardless of the number of passengers in a group or the distance of the trip.
- Most drivers charge a cleaning fee to passengers who get sick in the car. If they do, that fee (which usually ranges from \$100 to \$150) must be posted inside the car. Keep in mind that when a passenger gets sick in the car, the taxi is forced out of operation for the rest of the night while the driver gets the interior cleaned and sanitized. This situation is costly for the driver who loses a night's business, as well as the passenger who must pay the cleaning fee in addition to the meter fare. Therefore it's best to keep from getting into a taxi if you or your traveling companions aren't feeling well.
- Every taxi driver must make sure that the following are fully displayed and visible to passengers inside the cab:
 - **The driver's permit:** The City permits are orange and include a photo of the driver, the driver's full name, the permit number, and the permit expiration date. If a permit is not displayed or if it is partially obstructed, ask to see the permit to verify that the photo is that of your driver and that the expiration date is valid. "Rogue drivers", those who do not have a valid City taxicab driver permit, or drivers whose permits have expired, will not be able to produce a valid taxi driver permit from the City of Santa Barbara. If a driver's permit is not fully displayed, we recommend that you use another taxicab.
 - **Rate card:** The rate card on the interior of the taxicab will list all rates that a specific taxicab is allowed to charge. Check this card to be certain that you aren't being charged a higher rate than applies to your fare.
 - **Complaint Card:** This card lists the contact information for the Police Technician whom you should contact with complaints, questions, or comments about a taxicab, a taxi driver, or about the City's taxi program in general.

TAXI RATES:

- Taxi rates are broken down into three categories: the "first drop"; the "per mile" rate; and the "wait" rate.
 - **The "first drop"** is the starting fee on the meter at the time the taxi is hired, before the cab is even in motion.
 - **The "per mile" rate** is the fee you will be charged for each mile traveled. This rate is generally calculated in increments of 1/10th of a mile (i.e. if the per-mile rate is \$4.00, the meter will likely advance by 40 cents with each 1/10th of a mile traveled).
 - **The "wait" rate** is one that most people are unaware of. This is the rate you will pay when the car travels at 12 mph or slower, or when the cab is stopped for traffic or traffic lights. The meters are calibrated to charge either the "per mile" rate or the "wait" rate, depending on the speed of the vehicle, but will not charge both at once. It's very important for passengers to be aware of this rate, as a wait rate of \$60 per hour means that the meter will advance at a rate of \$1 per minute when the car is in slow traffic or at a stop light. The cost of a trip can increase quickly due to lengthy wait times. Therefore, regardless of the length of the trip, if you know that your route involves

many traffic lights, or if you will be traveling during heavy traffic, you will want to find a taxi with a low wait fee.

RATE VARIANCES IN SANTA BARBARA:

There are more than 65 taxi companies authorized to operate in the City of Santa Barbara, and each has its own rates. That means that two parties of the same group could leave from the same location to the same destination in two separate cabs and end up paying two very different fares based on the differences in the rates between the individual cab companies used.

Below is a range of current rates found among all the taxi companies authorized to operate in the City of Santa Barbara. The comparisons were made using each company's fares for flagged taxis during nighttime weekend hours. As you can see there are significant differences in the rates for each category, with the lowest rates for the first drop and wait time being less than half of the highest rates in those categories.

COMPARISON OF CURRENT SANTA BARBARA TAXI RATES:

	Lowest rate:	Highest rate:
First drop – meter will start with this fare:	\$1.50	\$3.10
Per-mile rate – the rate while traveling 12+ mph:	\$3.00	\$4.90
Wait rate – the rate charged when traveling under 12 mph or when stopped:	\$25/hour (42¢/minute)	\$60/hour (\$1.00/minute)

Note that some companies offer discounted fares which would apply under particular conditions, such as mid-week daytime trips, long distance trips, or pre-arranged fares. The rates above are for standard flagged fares during nighttime weekend hours.

If you have any questions, concerns, or comments about a taxicab, a taxi driver, or the taxi program in general, you may contact the Police Technician for assistance at (805) 897-2333 or permits@sbpd.com.

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